



TAKING OUT THE TRASH

March 8, 2004

What a Little Discipline Wouldn't Do

What is bullying? Why do kids bully? What are signs that you bully others? What are the effects of bullying? Are you being bullied? Do you witness others being bullied? Do you bully others? If you need answers to any of these questions, then there is a new website for you. The website is part of the Health Resources and Services Administration's new federal campaign -- "Stop Bullying Now!" -- launched to stop the age-old problem of kids picking on other kids. In addition to the website that features cartoons and games, the media campaign will feature radio and television spots to increase awareness. So if you want to "take a stand" or "lend a hand" go to www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov. ("Feds Push for 'Bullying' Education," KSNW-TV, March 5, 2004)

Tax Collection 101

According to the General Accounting Office (GAO), 27,000 private contractors owed \$3 billion in unpaid taxes as of September 30, 2002, and the Pentagon failed to take appropriate steps to recoup the money. The Debt Collection Improvement Act of 1996 requires the Pentagon to work with the IRS to levy up to 15% of each contract payment to offset the taxes owed. If the levy procedures alone had been utilized, the government could have saved \$100 million in FY02. The GAO also uncovered how the funds were being spent. One owner borrowed \$1 million from the company to purchase a furnished house, and another borrowed \$1 million to buy a boat, several cars, and a house outside the United States. The Pentagon also paid roughly \$90,000 for an individual to give motivational speeches on management and leadership even though the individual owed over \$100,000 in taxes and had not submitted a return since the late 1990s. It is worth noting that federal law does not preclude contractors with unpaid federal taxes from contracting with the federal government. ("Financial Management: Some DOD Contractors Abuse the Federal Tax System with Little Consequence," GAO, February 2004)

Suing the Hand that Funds You

Three Nevada counties used federal grant money to lobby against the Yucca Mountain Project in FY01 and FY02. Under the Nuclear Waste Policy Act, these funds are intended for impact assistance and inform Nevada residents of the Project's activities. "The use of the funds to influence legislative matters, pay litigation expenses, or support multi-State efforts and other coalition building activities" is specifically prohibited. That did not stop the counties from using \$3.3 million out of \$7.2 million inappropriately over a two-year period. The funds were used for lobbying against the Project and to host events and rallies in protest. For example, Clark County used some of its funds to hire a law firm to provide information on how citizens could sue the government for nuisance, trespass, and fear in regard to the waste being transported to Yucca Mountain through the county. ("Oversight Funds Provided to Local Governments in the State of Nevada," DOE/IG-0600, Department of Energy Inspector General, May 2003)

Lobbyists Bought and Paid for by Taxpayers

The Congressional Western Caucus recently highlighted a report from the Environmental Protection Agency's Inspector General that revealed that the Consumer Federation of America -- an environmental advocacy group -- received nearly \$5 million in educational grant funding that it used to lobby the EPA between 1996 and 2001. Such lobbying is illegal and violates the Lobbying Disclosure Act. ("Consumer Federation of America Foundation -- Costs Claimed Under EPA Cooperative Agreements," EPA Inspector General, March 1, 2004)

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